

Unlike many important cities, in the late 19th and early 20th Century, Alexandria did not set aside large swaths of open space or adopt a comprehensive open space plan that would guide the creation of a park system with interconnected linear and stream valley parks, waterfront parks and other open spaces, large and small. Alexandria's current park system includes a broad range of open space facilities, ranging from neighborhood parks and playgrounds to national parks. Some parks are linear in character, such as those that follow water courses. Others are located along the Potomac River and provide dramatic vistas up river to the U.S. Capitol and down river toward broad views of the Potomac River shoreline. This section of the report describes the current opportunities available to the City to conserve open space; a conceptual planning framework for the plan; and a description of 15 goals and associated plan recommendations.

A. OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Numerous open spaces throughout the City have potential to remain as open space through various methods of protection. These open spaces are currently not designated as parks or public open spaces. Some are privately owned, but designated as open space open to the public; for example, the Winkler Botanical Garden in the West End. Others are open spaces on properties owned by institutions such as the Virginia Theological Seminary property at Seminary Road and Quaker Lane.

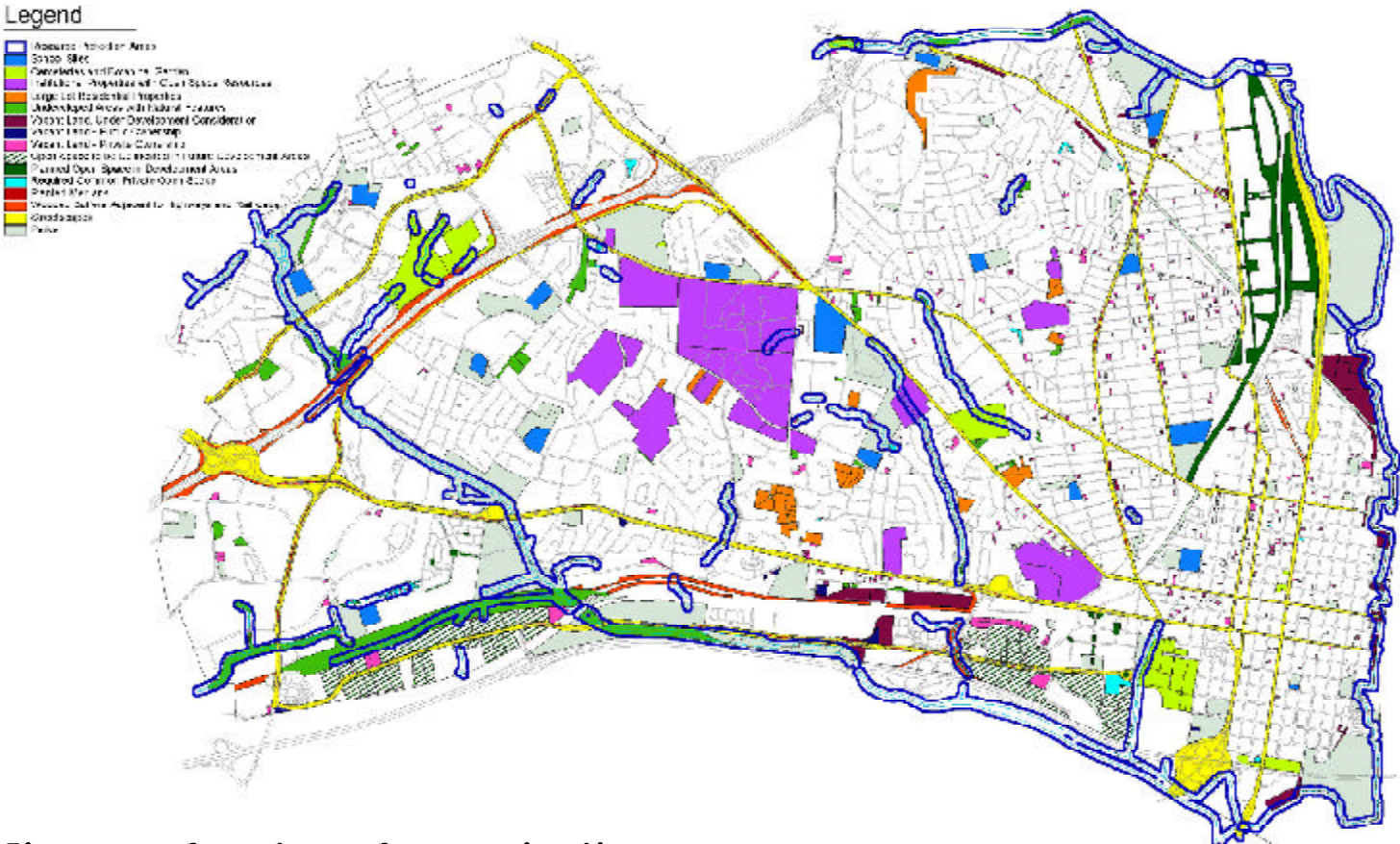
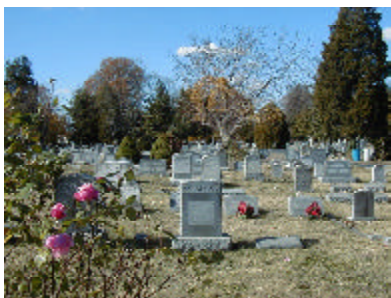


Figure 15: Open Space Opportunity Sites



Alexandria National Cemetery



Fort Ward

The open space opportunities have been organized into the following categories and are illustrated in the Open Space Opportunities Sites map.

- **Parks and Public Open Spaces**—provide the framework of the existing park system and upon which future open spaces will be added.
- **School Sites**—usually have important open space resources. Numerous school sites are adjacent to parks and public open spaces.
- **Cemeteries and Botanical Gardens**—are valuable open space resources that are generally privately owned.
- **Institutional Properties**—typically have valuable open space and natural resources on a portion of their land holdings.
- **Large Lot Residential Properties**—a number of residential properties have extensive open space, that usually include valuable vegetation or other natural resources.
- **Undeveloped Areas with Natural Features**—are typically located adjacent to stream valleys
- **Vacant Land Under Development**—certain vacant sites are under consideration for open space or recreation uses.
- **Vacant Land, Public Ownership**—these properties typically don't possess natural resources but can be developed into valuable open spaces.
- **Vacant Land, Private Ownership**—these properties also typically don't possess natural resources but can be developed into valuable open spaces.
- **Open Space to be Delineated in Future Development Areas**—these areas are usually large and are currently being studied by the City's Department of Planning and Zoning for future development potential including open space uses.
- **Planned Open Space in Development Areas**—these open spaces have either been built or are approved for construction.
- **Required Common Private Open Space**—are sites that have been approved by the City for open space uses.
- **Streetscapes**—these streets have potential to be further enhanced with streetscaping.
- **Planted Medians**—are green islands in the middle of streetscapes.
- **Wooded Buffers**—these areas provide attractive settings or buffers to roads or railroad rights of way.

B. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

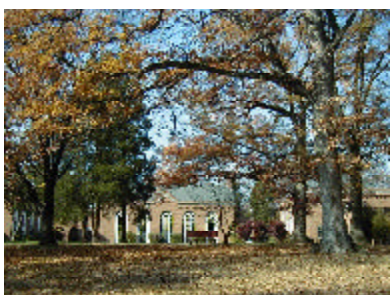
Alexandria has numerous opportunities to create a significant network of interconnected and linked open spaces throughout the City in order to create a meaningful and workable green infrastructure. Since the City lacks large undeveloped tracts of vacant or underdeveloped land to target for open space protection or enhancement, this plan has identified a framework for making the most of the small amount of available land for open space use. This framework includes the following:



New development areas should support the open space linkages throughout the city



The Green Crescent connects primary rivers and streams in Alexandria.



Large institutional properties become the Central Open Space Conservation Area



Linear parks are a part of the Open Space Corridors

1. The overall objective of the Open Space Plan is that of **making connections**. Alexandria's current pattern of open space areas primarily consists of isolated parks and open spaces in all sectors of the City. Linking open spaces to each other, expanding open spaces to provide better linkages and creating continuous parks along roadways and waterways will enable the City to finally have a park system built on Olmstedian principles of park planning. Basic to such principles is the concept of a linked system connecting a city's major open spaces through parkways, greenways, trails, and smaller open areas. One famous example of this is Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace" open space system in Boston.
2. The creation of a **Green Crescent** of open spaces that follows the alignment of the City's primary rivers and streams: Potomac River, Four Mile Run, Cameron Run and Holmes Run. The Green Crescent would be created by building upon the existing parks, natural areas and other open spaces, and by adding unprotected key sites to provide greenway and trail linkages and interconnected parkland. Utilizing Holmes Run as a model, the existing open spaces in the Green Crescent would, over time, require environmental remediation and ecological revitalization to restore, rehabilitate or create natural landscapes as well as recreation areas that are compatible with these natural areas. Hiker and biker trails and natural landscapes would be the predominate characteristics of the Green Crescent.
3. **A second segment of the Green Crescent** creates a linear park generally parallel to the existing railroad rights-of-way of WMATA and CSX and extends from Four Mile Run at Route 1 to Ben Brenman Park in the West End. This Crescent builds upon the existing open spaces of Simpson Field, George Washington Middle School, and others with new open spaces and linkages in areas that are currently vacant or underutilized. Dramatic vistas of the U.S. Capitol and the George Washington Masonic Temple will become orientation elements for this Crescent.
4. A **Central Open Space Conservation Area** is established in the heart of the City through the preservation of land owned by Episcopal High School, the Episcopal Theological Seminary and the Second Presbyterian Church. These institutions have protected their woodlands, specimen trees, streams and rolling open fields over many decades. Through a variety of protection mechanisms, these open spaces can be protected in perpetuity and, possibly, certain areas made accessible to the general public for many years to come.
5. **Open Space Corridors** can be created in various neighborhoods of the City. The Open Space Corridors build upon existing stream valley corridors – Hooffs Run, Taylor Run, Timber Branch, etc. – streets and existing parkland (public- and privately – owned) to create linear

greenways that link to the Green Crescent and the Central Open Space Conservation Area. These corridors are aligned along the following streets or stream valleys:

- Van Dorn Street
- Jordan Street
- Howard Street
- Fort Williams Parkway
- Quaker Lane
- Taylor Run
- King Street
- Timber Branch
- Hooffs Run
- Braddock Road

6. *Major Thoroughfares* in the City can be upgraded to become more pedestrian-friendly and attractive urban open spaces. Many of Alexandria's streets can become the backbone for improved streetscapes, bikeways and greenways, and can stimulate urban revitalization of adjacent communities and businesses. These thoroughfares include:

- East and West Glebe Roads

Legend

- Green Crescent
- Green Connector
- Open Space Conservation Areas
- Parks

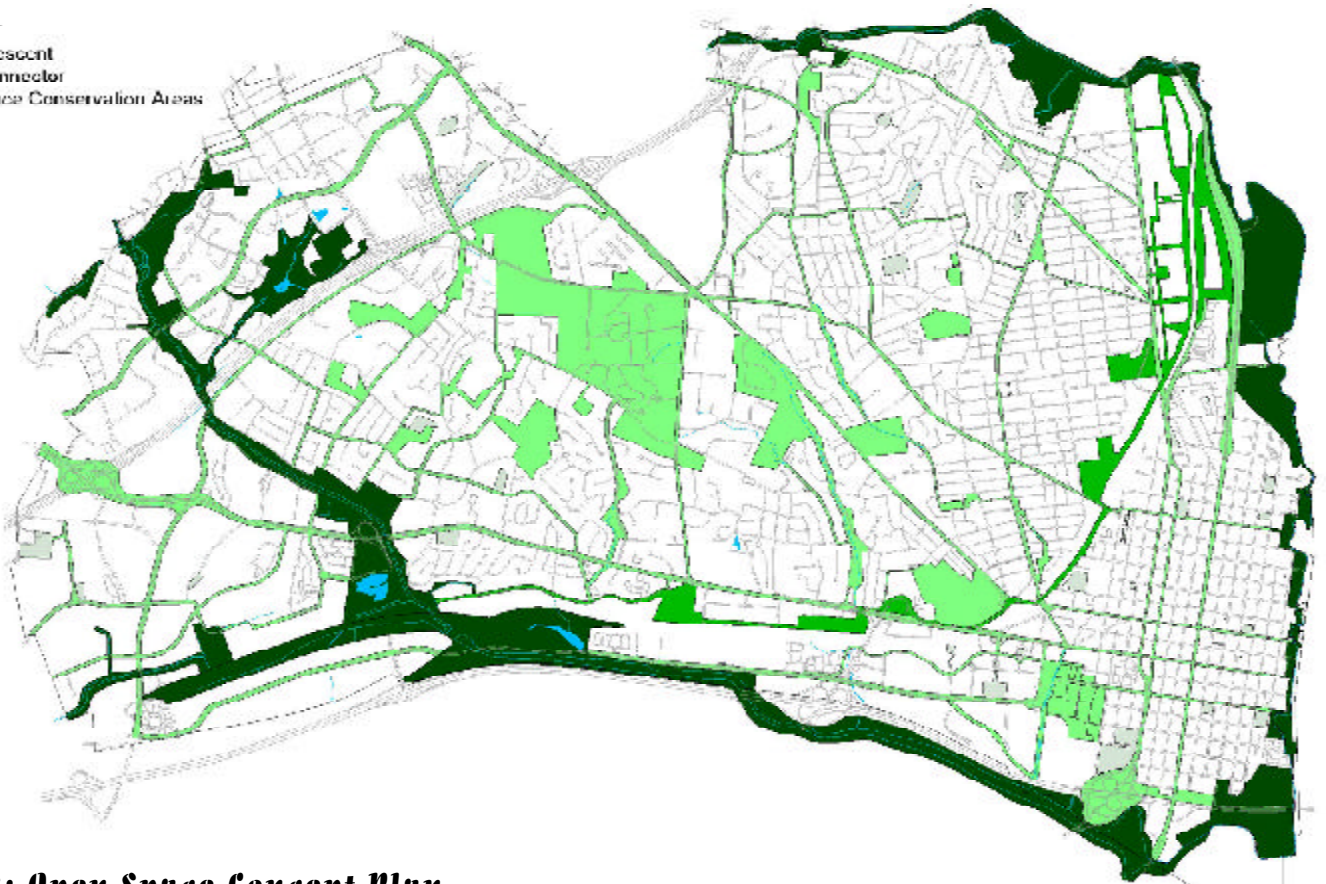


Figure 16: Open Space Concept Plan



Beauregard Street

- Braddock Road
- King Street
- Duke Street
- Eisenhower Avenue
- Beauregard Street
- Van Dorn Street
- Commonwealth Avenue
- Russell Road
- U.S. Route 1
- Washington Street

C. GOALS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

During the planning process for the preparation of this Open Space Plan, 15 goals were formulated. Through discussions at the three Planning District meetings, the Citywide Open Space Summit and Steering Committee meetings, the 15 goals and associated plan recommendations were defined, analyzed and finalized. The 15 goals and associated recommendations provide the overall framework for the plan. These goals include:

1. Protecting and enriching existing parks
2. Developing innovative opportunities for creating additional open space
3. Completing implementation of the Potomac River Waterfront Plan
4. Protecting and expanding stream valleys and other environmentally sensitive areas
5. Creating an open space network, The Green Crescent, in new development areas
6. Protecting and preserving institutional open space.
7. Maximizing use of public school open space areas to satisfy local needs
8. Preserving and protecting cemeteries
9. Creating public open space from vacant land
10. Linking and expanding the pedestrian, bicycle and trail system
11. Enhancing streetscapes and gateways
12. Expanding citywide street tree program and protecting existing trees and woodland areas
13. Encouraging the creation of Civic Parks at Metro Stations
14. Beautifying interchanges and highway corridors
15. Protecting privately-owned open space

The next section of this chapter describes each goal, along with its associated plan recommendations and strategies for implementation.

GOAL 1. PROTECT AND ENRICH EXISTING PARKS

Alexandria's existing public parks are the armature of its open space system. They provide both passive and active recreational amenities for neighbor-



Existing park

hoods and districts as well as for the City and the region. The existing parks are the focal points of communities and the locations for important civic events. As parks become more intensively used, the need for increased maintenance, management and planning becomes greater. In addition to identifying opportunities, the City should provide a strategy to continually protect the existing park system and identify opportunities to enhance park resources. An important component of this work will be in defining opportunities for park renovation, expansion and linkages to create a comprehensive open space network. Participants in the planning process were unanimous in their concern to protect remaining natural resources in existing parks.

The Plan defines opportunities for park renovation, expansion and linkages to create a park/open space network.

In addition, the Plan encourages the protection and enhancement of remaining natural resources in existing parks.

Recommendations for Goal 1

- Integrate the findings of the Open Space Inventory with those of the Needs Assessment Study.
- Continue the recent emphasis on increased maintenance of the existing park system and other public open spaces.
- Carefully assess existing heavily used parklands and recreation facilities in the Needs Assessment and determine methods for minimizing overuse (e.g., reprogramming or planned expansion).
- Look to the Needs Assessment to identify program needs (e.g., active recreation, passive activities, educational activities, etc.) and define potential areas for accommodating these.
- Inventory cultural and natural resources in the parks to protect existing resources and expand public education and enjoyment. Identify natural resource needs and define potential opportunities for accommodating these.

Implementation Strategies for Goal 1

- Work with Alexandria's business and residential communities to create an open space conservancy and stewardship program that can: (1) accept financial and property donations, (2) support renovation and expansion of parks and other public open spaces, and (3) create new parks and preserve existing open spaces and natural areas.
- Establish an open space endowment for the purchase and development of public open space. (Possible funding sources for this action are



Existing park by the Potomac River

discussed in Chapter 6.)

- Continue to seek increased City funding and other sources of funding for park maintenance, renovation and expansion, as well as for staff training and professional management to improve use of existing resources.
- Develop a master plan for each of the City's existing parks to guide short and long-term needs.
- Expand the City's volunteer programs, such as Adopt-a-Park, Adopt-a-Garden and Tree Stewards, to encourage organized groups to help with the maintenance of open space resources. (See Chapter 6 for additional discussion of this issue)
- Develop a management/stewardship plan for cultural and natural resources in Alexandria's parks.

GOAL 2. DEVELOP INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING ADDITIONAL PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The overarching concept for the Alexandria Open Space Plan includes: protecting existing parks, other publicly-owned open spaces and natural areas;



Figure 17: Goal 1 - Protect and Enrich Existing Parks



Innovative parking

linking existing parks and open space areas; creating continuous open space systems along the Potomac River and the City's stream valleys; creating a continuous open space system in a former industrial area, "The Green Crescent;" and creating a series of new small parks in under-served, high density communities. While the creation of additional public open space areas presents a challenge to the City in terms of cost, development trade-offs, and so on, it will be critical for the City to pursue these options in order to accommodate the increasing need for open space for the City's growing population. The Plan recommendations highlighted below identify a number of innovative methods for creating public open spaces.

Recommendations for Goal 2

- Seize opportunities quickly when land suitable for open space usage becomes available, including developed commercial or industrial land that could be converted to open space uses.
- Plan strategically for future opportunities to create, expand, or improve parks and publicly-owned natural areas and open spaces.
- Convert channelized stream valleys and other modified natural resource areas into verdant open spaces.
- Create parkland as well as recreational facilities atop new below-ground parking structures.
- Create new open spaces, and link existing open spaces, by bridging over roads (e.g., open space deck linking Fort Ward Park, NOVA campus, and the Episcopal High School).
- Utilize air rights over roadways to create new open space, recreation, habitat, and educational facilities.
- Expand sections of existing roadways to create traffic-free bike trails, pedestrian paths, and landscaped medians and sidewalks (e.g., King Street, Duke Street, Commonwealth Avenue and Telegraph Road).
- Utilize the following selection criteria for identifying privately-owned land suitable for acquisition by the City for parkland/open space use:
 - Privately owned land near or adjacent to existing parks and trails
 - Near or adjacent to existing schools
 - Near or adjacent to natural resource areas
 - At street endings to provide neighborhood linkages
 - Next to institutional properties with extensive open space, valuable natural resources, and/or potential public access
 - Adjacent to or linking existing / proposed trails or greenways
 - Small lots in dense urban neighborhoods for pocket parks, gardens, green spaces, and playgrounds (Old Town; Rosemont; western